

176 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

Torrington's fleet his victory was without
solid results.
He took some prizes, and burnt
Teignmouth, but he
neither destroyed the two detached
squadrons nor effected
a serious landing anywhere. Torrington was
dismissed
from his command and tried, in deference to
the popular
clamour against him. It was alleged that he
deliberately
refused to risk his own ships and exposed
the Dutch
squadron to destruction by deserting it. In his
defence he
said that his conduct was justified by the
result.

The French made no great advantage of
their victory,
tho' they put us to a great charge in
keeping up the
militia ; but had I fought otherwise, our fleet
had been
totally lost, and the kingdom had lain open to
an invasion.
What then would have become of us in the
absence of His
Majesty, and most of the land forces? As it
was, most men
were in fear that the French would invade;
but I was al-
ways of another opinion ; for I always said,
that whilst we
had a fleet in being, they would not dare to
make an attempt.

Torrington was unanimously acquitted by
the court
which tried him. Macaulay¹ and many
historians have
condemned his conduct, but it has been
lately vindicated
by a series of writers on naval strategy.
Admiral Colomb
was the first and his Xaval Warfare contains
the fullest
account of the battle and its preliminaries.²
Sir Cyprian

Bridge sums up the controversy by saying : ' Most seamen were at the time, have been since, and still are in agree- ment with Torrington. . . . Both as a strategist and as a tactician Torrington was immeasurably ahead of his con- temporaries. The only English admirals who can be placed above him are Hawke and Nelson. He paid the penalty of his pre-eminence : he could not make ignorant men and dull men see the meaning of the advantage of his

^IV, 1556-8 ;xv) ; 1955-7 (xvi)- ²Pp. 110-23.